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# Monitoring Social Capital in Hungary: A Short Review of Recent Research

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As a contribution to the Social Situation Report 2007, the Terms of Reference for this paper was to provide "measurement of social capital at the national level in terms of the proxies specified by the work program."

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## ABSTRACT

This report provides recent Hungarian data and some analysis on key indicators usually associated with social capital, including, among others, generalized trust, social contacts, associational membership. One of the themes of the report is the degree to which some of the standard measurements of social capital can misrepresent the nature of trust and social networks in a country. As they don't tend to rate organised politics or take an active part in civic life, the easy conclusion seems to be that Hungary is another low trust post socialist new member state. At the same time, a series of other studies demonstrates that various public institutions and services enjoy above average support and that Hungarians consider social networks important. They show above average contact with friends and family, with the majority declaring their belief that co-operation is an innate part of human nature.

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## 1. Generalized or Social Trust

- Hungarians have lower than EU average regard for certain national institutions, but far higher regard for local ones
- Levels of trust amongst the general population are above, and potentially significantly above the EU average

In terms of carrying out national surveys and reports on social trust in, there are increasing numbers of players in Hungary. Since 1990, the public opinion agency Szonda Ipsos has been asking people how they would rate various state and political institutions. Their latest ‘Prestige of Institutions’ report is from October 2006.<sup>1</sup> It found that there was increasing levels of trust in the police, local government, central ministries, the military and the Church. Trust in politicians and political parties was low, something that was also found in a survey by the social research institute TARKI<sup>2</sup> and the Community Development Department.<sup>3</sup> Low levels of trust in national politics is a consistent theme with those saying that they did not really trust or did not trust at all reaching almost 90%.<sup>4</sup>

We would argue that the information on trust in institutions should be disaggregated so as not to restate the simple stereotypical view that Hungarians (and other countries in the former socialist block) have little trust in their political institutions. The recent European Social Reality report produced by Eurobarometer is a good illustration of this problem with aggregation.<sup>5</sup> The section on Trust in Institutions sought opinions on trust in national governments, Parliaments, political parties and finally, local authorities. They revealed an EU wide scepticism towards central political institutions, the average being that only 20% expressed trust in political parties. Far higher levels of trust were found in local institutions with the average being 49%. The authors concluded that it was possible to say that ‘the more distant the political entity, the less likely respondents are to trust it.’

In Hungary, those expressing trust and confidence in their local authority was 60%, which places the country fourth amongst the EU27. Furthermore, the proportion of respondents saying that they do not really trust their local authority was the lowest in Europe at 29%. This reflects the very decentralized administrative structure of Hungary and despite the problems of low revenues, rural unemployment and patchy public services, the approval ratings are notably high. However, this is completely lost to the reader of the Eurobarometer report because the authors exclude local authorities from the question ‘number of political institutions people tend to trust in’. The result is to perpetuate the clichéd division of old/new member states according to levels of trust. In the Eurobarometer survey, Poland shows the highest levels of distrust with 81% saying they trust no political institution, followed by six former socialist countries, including Hungary. At the same time, when Poles were asked for their opinion of their local authorities, whilst they were lower than the EU average, they were by no means the lowest. The Italians, Greeks, Bulgarians, Lithuanians and Romanians all showed lower levels of trust in their local institutions.

1 Data obtained from Szonda Ipsos, a major player in the field of market, media and opinion research in Hungary. More information about the company can be found in English at <http://www.szondaipsos.hu/en/> (accessed July 23, 2007).

2 <http://www.tarki.hu> (accessed July 23, 2007)

3 <http://www.talaljuk-ki.hu/> (accessed July 23, 2007)

4 Community Development Department of the Hungarian Institute for Culture with the Association for Community Development. *Közbizalom 2006*, Péterfi Ferenc, 2006. <http://www.talaljuk-ki.hu/index.php/article/articleview/881/1/16/> (Accessed July 23, 2007)

5 Data collection November–December 2006, available at [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs\\_273\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_273_en.pdf) (Accessed July 23, 2007)

The second main component of social trust is the levels amongst the general population. There were two significant reports in the past year. The first was the latest annual social survey from TARKI which used data from both Eurobarometer and the European Social Survey.<sup>6</sup> According to this report, one quarter of Hungarians answered positively to the statement ‘people in general can be trusted’. This was the figure used in the last report of this network and it places Hungary the highest of the new member states and above other several Mediterranean countries such as Italy, France, Greece, and Portugal.

A further indicator of relatively high levels of social trust amongst the population came from a recent survey carried out by TARKI and the Central European University.<sup>7</sup> Respondents were asked their opinion of a series of statements about trust and co-operation. To the statement that most people can be trusted, 44% said that they agreed and a further 10% said that they strongly agreed with this statement. This is double the level from Eurobarometer and the ESS, yet it needs to be qualified by looking at the other questions that respondents were asked. To the statement ‘people are only willing to co-operate with others if it is their own interest’, the 50% agreed and a further 30% strongly agreed; to the statement ‘if one does not pay continual attention, others will take advantage of you’, then 53% agreed and 28% strongly agreed. The survey was announced in the newspapers as ‘man, the selfish ant’. The first question had been a general statement about predisposition to co-operate. To the statement ‘it’s human nature to co-operate with others’, 51% agreed and 30% strongly agreed.

The authors argued that there was no contradiction in the beliefs that people can be trusted but that you need to watch out. Like the ant, there may well be an innate tendency to co-operate but, in practice, self-interest may often override this feeling.

## 2. Social Contacts

- Just over a third of Hungarians meet with family or friends every week
- 61% of villagers talk with a neighbor at least once a week
- Social isolation can be bad for your health, especially if you are a middle aged man

There have been several studies and reports in the past year on social contacts, some focus on the differences between the types of settlement, one investigates friendship within the Roma and a third is a follow up on the connections between social isolation and mortality rates. According to the last Szonda Ipsos study of 2006, 35% said that they met with friends at least once a week and 34% said that they met with relatives once a week.<sup>8</sup> The same survey mentioned above by TARKI and the Central European University found that people living in the capital tended to speak more to relatives and friends on the phone than in the towns and villages. 80% of those in Budapest said they were in phone contact every week with relatives and just over 60% said they spoke with friends every week. When it comes to face to face meeting with family and friends there is a clear split according to the size of settlements. 39% of people living in towns meet up every week with their relatives, compared to 28% in the capital. A full 60% of villagers meet up with the friends at least once a week, whilst the comparable figure for the capital is 38%.

6 Füzér Katalin, Gerő Márton, Sik Endre, Zongor Gábor, 'Társadalmi tőke fogalma és keletkezéstörténete' in (eds) Kolosi Tamas, Toth Istvan Gyorgy, Vukovich Gyorgy. *Társadalmi Riport 2006*. TARKI, 2006

7 Opinion poll carried out by the social research institute TARKI in cooperation and behalf of Central European University for the European Union FP6 project Eurequal. More information about the results can be found on the TARKI website <http://www.tarki.hu/hu/news/2007/kitekint/20070702.html> (accessed July 23, 2007) and more information about the is available at <http://eurequal.politics.ox.ac.uk/> (accessed July 23, 2007)

8 <http://www.szondaipsos.hu/en/> (Accessed July 23, 2007)

In its social report for 2006, TARKI compared the figures on family and friendships between the Roma and non-Roma population. This study found that fewer numbers of Roma lived alone and that perceptions of the importance of family and friends were at higher levels compared to the majority population. One striking finding was the number of people that Roma respondents considered to be their friend. In the majority population, when asked how many friends do you have, the average number across the country is 4. The same question asked to a Roma respondent gave an average number of friends as 35, with 21 of these coming from the Roma and 14 from the majority.<sup>9</sup>

Using the same surveys to investigate the degree of social isolation, TARKI found that in 2004, 29% of respondents claimed not to have any friends at all.<sup>10</sup> This is actually a drop from previous findings. In 1997 the proportion of people claiming not to have any friends was 34%. A corroborative question was used to test whether differing understandings of the word friendship might distort the picture and so interviewers asked respondents how far they would say that they felt themselves alone. If that was queried, the interviewer was instructed to explain by saying it meant that there was no-one to talk about daily things. 6% said that this was absolutely true for them and a further 19% said it was partly true for them. On average 58% said that it was not true at all for them that they had no-one to talk to.

As mentioned in earlier reports, there has been some research to investigate what might be behind the high mortality rates in Hungary, particularly for men. Between 1960 and 2005, mortality rates for the 40-69 age group increased by 55%. Put another way, in 2005 11,300 more men in this age bracket died compared with 35 years earlier.<sup>11</sup> Skrabbe and Kopp have now carried out two major studies of risk factors associated with premature death.<sup>12</sup> Aside for including various lifestyle factors such as consumption of alcohol or smoking, the researchers also included a number of socio-environmental considerations. The two of most relevance were social capital, which they took as a composite of trust in others, levels of reciprocity and membership in civic associations, and a measure devised from earlier US studies called collective efficacy. It was first used in the 1995 Community Survey on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods and is based on two main components, “social cohesion” which is the ability of neighborhoods to realize common values of the residents and “informal social control”, a belief that neighbors would intervene in risky situations.<sup>13</sup>

The Semmelweis study found that after education, collective efficacy, was the strongest factor in preventing premature death. As a determining factor, the researchers found it more significant than not smoking or drinking excess alcohol. Social capital along with involvement in religious organizations was also significantly positively associated with mortality. In early 2007, a follow-up study was presented with fieldwork from 2005 containing interviews with nearly 5,000 out of the original sample.<sup>14</sup> 8,8% of the men and 3,6% of the women had died since the first study with cancer caused most of the deaths, followed by cardiovascular diseases. The analysis showed that a positive life quality reduced the risk of dying early by half for men. A sense of meaning to life and a secure working place reduced the risk threefold, as did regular exercise. These findings took traditional factors and risks into account such as age, education, smoking, and alcohol consumption and body weight.

9 Fruzsina Albert, Beata David, 'A kapcsolati toke dimenzioi etnikai metszetben'. Tarsadalmi Riport 2006. TARKI, 2006, p 351-368

10 TARKI, Haztartas Monitor, 2004 <http://www.tarki.hu> (Accessed July 23, 2007)

11 Media material available at <http://www.sote.hu/> (Accessed July 23, 2007)

12 Maria Kopp et al, “Social capital and collective efficacy in Hungary: cross sectional associations with middle aged female and male mortality, *Journal of Epidemal Community Health* (2004) 58” available at <http://jech.bmj.com/cgi/reprint/58/4/340.pdf> (Accessed July 23, 2007)

13 See Sampson R.J., Raudenbuch S.W. and Earls F. 'Neighborhoods and violent crime, a multilevel study of collective efficacy' *Science* 1997: 227: 918-24

14 <http://www.sote.hu/> (Accessed July 23, 2007)

The most important reasons for the high mortality rates were increasing levels of chronic depression and stress. This has not improved since 2002; then 10 percent of men in the study were classified as gravely or moderately depressed, by 2005, that figure increased to 15%.<sup>15</sup> For women the rate was even higher, increasing from 15% to 19%. Other risk factors were not living with a spouse/partner, or having a spouse with low socioeconomic status (significant association).<sup>16</sup>

### 3. Social Networks

- ‘Weak ties’ amongst the Roma are at the same level as amongst the majority population
- High levels of belief in the ability of friends and family to help in case of trouble

As an indicator of the nature of informal support provision, TARKI surveyed people’s experiences of giving, borrowing and lending money. Carried out in 2004, the survey found that one quarter of respondents gave money to a relative who was not part of his or her immediate household in the past two years. There was far less lending amongst friends and acquaintances: only 5.5% claimed that they had given money to a person who was not their relative. 16% person stated that they had borrowed money from someone who was not living in their household. In terms of donations to associations or foundations, and not including targeted tax donations, then 20% said that they had given money and 28% said that they had given in-kind donations in the past two years. In terms of general beliefs concerning friends and family, 81% partly or fully agreed with the statement that “in case of trouble I can always rely on my family or friends”. Only 19% partly or fully agreed with the statement „in case of trouble I can only rely upon myself.”<sup>17</sup>

The earlier mentioned study by Albert and David found significantly more contacts amongst with family, extended family, neighbors and friends among Roma. However, the level of “weak ties” defined as knowing or having contact with a series of named professions were more or less the same in the two population groups.<sup>18</sup>

In another study, the same authors looked at personal networks within the family, or to be more specifically, between a mother, father and a teenage child.<sup>19</sup> Using name-generator situations, children named an average of 5.38 persons who they would know in three different situations (receiving instrumental help, mental support and spending free time), mothers 4.53 and fathers 4.38. The scale of what the authors called “empty triangles”, that is when none of the three family members mentions each other in a given situation is 11% for moral support, 18% for instrumental help, and 36% for spending free time.<sup>20</sup>

15 <http://www.swin.edu.au/victims/resources/assessment/affect/bdi.html> (Accessed July 23, 2007)

16 <http://jech.bmj.com/cgi/content/full/59/8/675> (Accessed July 23, 2007)

17 TARKI database, TDATA-G01 – 2004/12, for more information on the TARKI database, see <http://www.tarki.hu> (Accessed July 23, 2007)

18 Respondents were offered a choice from 20, including drivers, lawyers, doctors, teachers, child nurses, engineers, bricklayers etc.

19 Fruzsina Albert and Beata David, ‘Men and Women in the Family as Reflected in a Two-Generational study’. in *Changing Roles* Eds. Ildikó Nagy, Marietta Pongrácz, István György Tóth. TÁRKI Budapest. 99-116.

20 Ibid at p 104

## 4. Social Care Provision

- Increasing number of mentoring and stipends programs in education

There have been increasing number of situations in which the government and the civic sector provides special interventions in education. The overall aim of these different schemes is to improve children's participation in education through specialized measures. One of these is the scheme of mentoring which might help overcome certain disadvantages. Particularly, but not exclusively addressed to the Roma population, mentors support children in school, providing extra tuition, and generally helping access various state support schemes.

To give some examples of these schemes, the 'Arany János Support Program for the Gifted' of the Ministry of Education facilitates the educational progression of gifted but socially disadvantaged students coming from small settlements. Participating students receive a study grant, while the institutions receive double the amount of the per student capita grant. The program is concerned with the successful preparation for higher education studies.

The Budapest Public Foundation for the Development of Public Education launched its Mentor Program for Roma students in 1999. This helps seventh and eighth-grade Roma students continue studies in secondary school. Individual mentors provide after-school lessons to a maximum of five students. The 'Roma Integration Program of the 'Ec-Pec Foundation' also offers help to disadvantaged Roma students to achieve reasonable school results. Their special development program supports lagging students in special school types or in small-sized remedial education groups within normal school program. Roma teaching assistants support the work of teachers in the schools participating in the program. The two-year pilot phase of the program proved that at least half of all Roma students attending special schools are able to meet normal curricular requirements if they are given appropriate support and care.<sup>21</sup>

Finally, the National Public Foundation for the Remedial Education of Disabled Children and Students has been especially active in providing funds and programs.<sup>22</sup> These have included training programs for developing a supportive attitude for parents and day-care teachers; programs to facilitate early diagnosis and early development; improving resources for schools to accommodate integrative educational programs; the development of a network of travelling special educational needs teachers; information exchange and the promotion of co-operation in micro regions.

One other dimension of social care that might be usefully explored as a useful indicator of social capital is excess deaths, i.e. deaths that would not normally have occurred but for the occurrence of a specific phenomena. The phrase is often used in the context of severe hot or cold weather, for instance, the Hungarian medical authorities, claimed that they believed 500 people had died as a result of the recent high temperatures. Researchers studying risk factors that contributed to excess deaths in the Chicago heatwave in 1995 concluded that 'those at greatest risk of dying from the heat were people with medical illnesses who were socially isolated and did not have access to air conditioning.'<sup>23</sup> This importance of social isolation as a key risk factor was confirmed by other research into the Parisian heatwave in 2003 and a recent study of excess deaths in the UK.<sup>24</sup> Clearly, there will be other factors to be taken into account, but so far as the above studies were concerned, social isolation seemed to be of more importance in exacerbating the numbers of excess deaths than deprivation, class, race and sex.

21 [http://www.ecpec.hu/content/content\\_4.html?setlang=english](http://www.ecpec.hu/content/content_4.html?setlang=english) (Accessed July 23, 2007)

22 <http://www.oki.hu/printerFriendly.php?tipus=cikk&kod=Education2003-Special> (Accessed July 23, 2007)

23 Semenza JC, Rubin CH, Falter KH, et al. 'Heat-related deaths during the July 1995 heat wave in Chicago', *New England Journal of Medicine* 1996; 335:84-90

24 S Hajat, R S Kovats and K Lachowycz, 'Heat-related and cold-related deaths in England and Wales: who is at risk?' *Occupational and Environmental Medicine* 2007;64:93-100

## 5. Interest in Politics

- Skepticism towards political parties but high interest in politics
- Increasing belief in the ability to influence local issues

Despite the earlier statements concerning belief in political parties and politicians, both admissions of interest in politics and participation in elections are relatively high in Hungary. In the last elections, according to one measurement, two thirds said that they were interested in the political elections, compared with 60% in 2003.<sup>25</sup> The turnout in national elections in spring 2006 was 64.39%<sup>26</sup> and in local elections in fall 2006, 53.12%<sup>27</sup> There were not any big differences in turnout between the major regions. On county level, the poorest northeast Hungary had somewhat surprising the highest turnout with 58.07%. Budapest also had a high turnout, 55.80 percent, while Csongrad in the south had the lowest turnout, 48.69 percent.

A September 2006 survey carried out for the Community Development Department measured the inclination for participation in local democracy. Compared to the previous year, there were some positive developments. 38.7% thought that they were able to influence the issues where they are living to at least some degree, which was an increase with 2.7 percent. One in four respondent claimed to have been in contact with a local political representative during the past twelve months, and 7.6% claimed to have contacted a parliamentary representative. A third of all respondents claimed to have contacted their local government, the same proportion said that they had taken part in a public meeting, and 11 percent said that they had been in a demonstration. 22.9 percent had signed a petition.<sup>28</sup>

A flash Eurobarometer study from 2006 reported similar but slightly lower numbers concerning political participation, placing Hungary 21st out of 25 in the “involvement in political life” list.<sup>29</sup> However, an earlier survey by TARKI measured formal participation in politics as very low. Less than one percent said they had been active in a political party, and less than two percent had taken part in any other political movement.<sup>30</sup>

## 6. Associational Membership

- Continued rise in the number of registered non-profits, but still small numbers say that they are members

The number of not-for-profit organizations in Hungary has risen continually, from 50,601 in 1996 to 76,864 ten years later.<sup>31</sup> About 8% of these organizations are involved in the economic development of settlements with 1.5% are advocacy organizations pursuing equal opportunities etc. In total, the NGO

25 Angelosz-Robert in Tarsadalmi Riport 2006 op cit

26 Data on Hungarian parliamentary elections in English at [http://www.valasztas.hu/parval2006/en/07/7\\_0.html](http://www.valasztas.hu/parval2006/en/07/7_0.html) (accessed on July 23, 2007).

27 Data on Hungarian local elections available at [http://www.valasztas.hu/hu/08/8\\_0.html](http://www.valasztas.hu/hu/08/8_0.html) (accessed July 23, 2007)

28 The Community Development Department *ibid.*

29 EU Communication and the citizens. General Public Survey and Analytical Report. Eurobarometer, September 2006. Available at [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/flash/fl\\_189a\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/flash/fl_189a_en.pdf) (Accessed July 23, 2007)

30 TARKI database TDATA – G37 2005, for more information visit the TARKI website at <http://www.tarki.hu> (Accessed July 23, 2007)

31 Hungarian Central Statistical Office, [http://portal.ksh.hu/pls/ksh/docs/hun/xstadat/tab12\\_01\\_02\\_01a.html](http://portal.ksh.hu/pls/ksh/docs/hun/xstadat/tab12_01_02_01a.html) (Accessed July 23, 2007)

sector employs 63,000 persons full-time, and another 24,000 part-time.<sup>32</sup> However, the membership of these organizations and associations is relatively small. Surveys regularly find that the number of persons claiming to be taking part in organized voluntary associations would be in the single digits. One interesting survey in this respect was carried out by the Community Development Department. When asked about their trust in various public bodies, only 12% said that they had a lot of trust in civil society, almost 40% said that they had some trust, but the proportion of those saying they had little or no trust in civil society was almost 40%.<sup>33</sup>

The problem with relying on associational membership as a good indicator of social capital was highlighted by the European Social Reality report. The survey claimed that ‘close to 8 out of 10 EU citizens consider helping others or voluntary work an important aspect of their life’. They then tried to find out more about how that belief was acted upon. Echoing earlier debates about the differences between active and passive membership, the authors were careful to ask about active participation and then to offer a long if perhaps overly detailed list of the different types of organizations people might participate in or do voluntary work for. The striking finding was that such high numbers claimed that voluntary work was an important part of their life, very few said that they did this through the associations listed in the survey. Only sports and leisure clubs made it over 10%, the majority of other associations received recognition from less than 5% of respondents.

This was not merely the case for former socialist countries. The proportion replying that they did not participate or do voluntary work in any of the listed associations was 65% for the EU27. Hungary did score above average with 81% saying that they did not take part in any of these associations, but this places them in the same company as the Spanish, the Austrians, the Greeks and the Romanians. According to the survey, the Bulgarians as the least likely to take part in formal associations, followed by the Portuguese.

The implication is that whilst surveys consistently indicate high levels of willingness to offer practical support to others, questions concerning associational activity do not seem to be able to capture that reality. It may reflect the tendency for people to paint themselves in a more flattering light than is actually the case, it may also be because the tendency has been to try to avoid the passive, occasional participant in favor of the regular volunteer, hence the stress on active participation. It also might be the mention of voluntary work does not sit well in countries where the phrase has non-voluntary connotations. Whatever the explanation, there does seem to be a problem in using associational membership as a reliable indicator of social capital.

## 7. Citizenship

A set of questions to measure citizenship attitudes was included in a survey by TARKI in 2005.<sup>34</sup> In this, 74% agreed fully or mainly with the statement „People should use part of their free time to help each other, while only 18% agreed with the statement „society would be happier if everyone dealt just with their own things. 85% think that „people should not cheat with their taxes” whilst 40% agree with the statement that „if one wants to make money, one can not always be honest.” 63% said that they have never deliberately avoided paying VAT or other taxes, by not asking the service-provider for a proper receipt/invoice, and 86% have never used a document in an improper way or falsified a document to obtain a benefit he or she was not entitled to. 65% also agreed fully or partially with the statement that „one must always adhere to the laws, even if that means missing a great opportunity”,

32 Statistics obtained from material provided by the Hungarian Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor.

33 Community Development Department op cit.

34 TARKI database, TDATA – G37 2005, for more information on the TARKI database, see <http://www.tarki.hu> (Accessed July 23, 2007)

while 18% thought that „on a case by case basis it is acceptable that people do things which are not in accordance with the laws.”

## 8. Monetary Regionalism

According to the European Social Reality report, Hungarians have the lowest general life satisfaction levels in EU, being especially unhappy with the standard of living (only 64% satisfied) and their quality of life (73% satisfaction). In other areas, such as a sense of security in one's own neighborhood 69% felt they could walk safely alone after dark in their own area. When TARKI asked people to grade their happiness between 0 and 10. 52% marked 6 or better.<sup>35</sup>

One recent poll showed positive developments regarding personal worries. Compared to 2003, fewer are worried about illnesses of themselves or family members, by loneliness or by war. Numbers finding the economic situation a problem is growing, as is the rate of persons finding the high numbers of foreigners a problem. More people are also disappointed with the changes (or lack of changes) since the political and economical turn in 1990. 64% rated disappearance of old morals a big problem, compared to 58% four years ago.<sup>36</sup>

According to a survey from 2006, Hungarian attitudes towards work are relatively relaxed, with more people agreeing with the statement that *“one should rather earn less, but not be a slave under work”* than *“work for me is a challenge”*.<sup>37</sup> In the latest Eurobarometer report, 41% report that they find their work too demanding or stressful, which is on par with the EU average.<sup>38</sup> Reader's Digest Hungary found that most children are satisfied with their parents. On a 1-5 scale, mothers get 4.42 for the statement “she gives me a home where I feel well and safe”. Fathers scored 4.15 for the same statement. Mothers got an average of 4.16 at the statement “having such qualities that I like and respect” and fathers 3.92.<sup>39</sup>

## 9. Conclusions

One of the themes of this report has been the degree to which some of the standard measurements of social capital can misrepresent the nature of trust and social networks in a country. As they don't tend to rate organised politics or take an active part in civic life, the easy conclusion seems to be that Hungary is another low trust post socialist new member state. At the same time, a series of other studies demonstrates that various public institutions and services enjoy above average support and that Hungarians consider social networks important. They show above average contact with friends and family, with the majority declaring their belief that co-operation is an innate part of human nature. One interesting ongoing question is to investigate the social lines of that co-operation. For example, it might be instructive to compare the numbers of beds in residential care homes with the data on associational activity. According to figures from last year, Hungary has one of the lowest numbers of beds in the EU, 6.4 per 10,000, compared with over 100 per 10,000 in Belgium. This might suggest

35 *ibid*

36 Poll by Gfk, summary called “Nőtt a rendszerváltásban csalódottak száma” accessible at <http://www.gfk.hu/sajtokoz/fr6.htm> (Accessed July 23, 2007)

37 Szonda Ipsos, 2006.

38 European Social Reality. Report. Eurobarometer February 2007 [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs\\_273\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_273_en.pdf) (accessed July 19, 2007) p 27.

39 Study refereed in the daily newspaper “Nepszabadsag”, May 25, 2007, containing an interview with psychologist Regos Judit.

that the vast majority of elderly people continue to live in their own homes, but that they do so with the informal support of relatives, neighbours, and friends. This is the way in which many people consider themselves providing help and support to others. In other words, attitudes towards care of the family might be an important variable in determining the social capital index. People might declare high social trust but not act on it within formal associations. This should not be taken to mean a wholly insular, 'familial amorality' instead, social care might be practically given to those outside the family too. The high numbers of people claiming to meet and talk with neighbours is testament to a perhaps less mobile society.

By the same token, it is clear that the situation is changing, particularly for the elderly, the numbers of excess deaths during high summer or frozen winter might suggest a bleaker view of the changing stocks of social capital in Hungary.

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